

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI
EASTERN DIVISION**

JAMES COUNTS,)	
)	
Petitioner,)	
)	
v.)	No. 4:15-CV-644-NAB
)	
STATE OF MISSOURI, et al.,)	
)	
Respondents.)	

MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

This matter is before the Court on James Counts’ (registration no. 1187482) filing of a petition for writ of mandamus [Doc. #1] and motion for leave to proceed in forma pauperis and to appoint counsel [Doc. #2]. The Court will grant petitioner in forma pauperis status and assess an initial partial filing fee of \$56.25, as set forth below. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). Furthermore, based upon a review of the petition, the Court finds that this action should be dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B). Petitioner’s motion for counsel will be denied.

28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1)

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1), a prisoner bringing a civil action in forma pauperis is required to pay the full amount of the filing fee. If the prisoner has insufficient funds in his prison account to pay the entire fee, the Court must

assess and, when funds exist, collect an initial partial filing fee of 20 percent of the greater of (1) the average monthly deposits in the prisoner's account; or (2) the average monthly balance in the prisoner's account for the prior six-month period. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(1). After payment of the initial partial filing fee, the prisoner is required to make monthly payments of 20 percent of the preceding month's income credited to the prisoner's account. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(b)(2). The agency having custody of the prisoner will forward these monthly payments to the Clerk of Court each time the amount in the prisoner's account exceeds \$10, until the filing fee is fully paid. *Id.*

Petitioner has submitted an affidavit and a certified copy of his prison account statement for the six-month period immediately preceding the submission of his petition. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(1),(2). A review of petitioner's account statement indicates an average monthly deposit of \$281.27, and an average monthly account balance of \$72.71. Petitioner has insufficient funds to pay the entire filing fee. Accordingly, the Court will assess an initial partial filing fee of \$56.25, which is 20 percent of petitioner's average monthly deposit.

28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court must dismiss a pleading filed in forma pauperis if the action is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is

immune from such relief. An action is frivolous if it "lacks an arguable basis in either law or fact." *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 328 (1989). An action is malicious if it is undertaken for the purpose of harassing the named defendants and not for the purpose of vindicating a cognizable right. *Spencer v. Rhodes*, 656 F. Supp. 458, 461-63 (E.D.N.C. 1987), *aff'd* 826 F.2d 1059 (4th Cir. 1987). An action fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted if it does not plead "enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face." *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544,570 (2007).

Moreover, in reviewing a pro se pleading under § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court must give the petition the benefit of a liberal construction. *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972). The Court must also weigh all factual allegations in favor of the petitioner, unless the facts alleged are clearly baseless. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 32 (1992).

The Petition

Petitioner seeks a writ of mandamus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1651 against the State of Missouri and Dent County Circuit Judges Kelly Parker and Sanborn Ball "to compel [them] to release [petitioner] on probation or absent probation in [his] criminal case, Dent County No. 08C7-CR00504-01." Petitioner complains that ex parte hearings are being held, in violation of his due process rights.

Discussion

Petitioner's request for a writ of mandamus is legally frivolous. This Court is authorized to issue writs of mandamus or other extraordinary writs only in aid of its jurisdiction, either existing or potential. *See* 28 U.S.C.A. § 1651(a); *Middlebrooks v. Thirteenth Judicial Dist. Circuit Court, Union County*, 323 F.2d 485, 486 (8th Cir. 1963). The actions of the named respondents in this case are not within the jurisdiction of this Court. *See Middlebrooks*, 323 F.2d at 486. *Cf. Veneri v. Circuit Court of Gasconade Co.*, 528 F.Supp. 496, 498 (E.D. Mo. 1981) (federal courts have no superintending control over and are without authority to issue writ of mandamus to direct state court or its judicial officers in performing duties).

Moreover, to the extent that petitioner is attempting to challenge or appeal a state judge's order(s) in an underlying state criminal matter, the instant mandamus petition is without merit. Federal district courts are courts of original jurisdiction; they lack subject matter jurisdiction to engage in appellate review of state court decisions. *Postma v. First Fed. Sav. & Loan*, 74 F.3d 160, 162 (8th Cir. 1996). "[Federal] [r]eview of state court decisions may be had only in the Supreme Court." *Id.*

The Court will not liberally construe this action as a petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254, because there is no indication that petitioner

has exhausted his state remedies, and he has neither requested nor consented to such a reclassification. *See Braden v. 30th Judicial Circuit Court of Kentucky*, 410 U.S. 484 (1973) (in the absence of exceptional circumstances, a state prisoner must exhaust currently available and adequate state remedies before invoking federal habeas corpus jurisdiction); *Morales v. United States*, 304 F.3d 764, 765 (8th Cir. 2002) (Court should not reclassify a pleading as a habeas corpus action, unless and until petitioner has been afforded an opportunity either to withdraw the pleading or to consent to the reclassification).

For these reasons, this action will be dismissed pursuant to § 1915(e)(2)(B).

Accordingly,

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that petitioner's motion for leave to proceed in forma pauperis and motion for appointment of counsel [Doc. #2] is **GRANTED IN PART AND DENIED IN PART**. Petitioner is granted in forma pauperis status, and his motion for counsel is denied as moot.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that petitioner shall pay an initial partial filing fee of \$56.25 within thirty (30) days from the date of this order. Petitioner is instructed to make his remittance payable to "Clerk, United States District Court," and to include upon it: (1) his name; (2) his prison registration number; (3) the case number; and (4) that the remittance is for an original proceeding.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Clerk shall not issue process or cause process to issue, because the petition is legally frivolous and fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B).

A separate Order of Dismissal shall accompany this Memorandum and Order.

Dated this 12th day of May, 2015.

\s/ Jean C. Hamilton
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE